**Title**: Promoting access to quality and responsive mental health care and services in Ghana.

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**Session Abstract:**

Mental illness is considered an epidemic throughout Africa due to systematic financial, structural and policy constraints. Historically, mental illness has been neglected in Africa due to limited, allocated resources, lack of infrastructures, inaccessibility to health services, profound stigmatisation, poor quality of care and superstitious beliefs around the cause of mental illness. In Ghana, access to mental health services continues to be challenged despite recent improvement in policy and legal frameworks. Mental health disorders affect over 2.8 million people in Ghana, but only 2% of them have access to basic mental health services. Meanwhile, the country has only three specialist psychiatric hospitals, 16 psychiatrists and 1,558 psychiatric nurses in the country. Despite recent efforts to integrate mental health and general health services, systematic constraints have led to treatment, quality and support gaps in both mental and general health services.

This organized session aims to create a platform for deliberation and collaboration for mental health development in Ghana by bringing together key actors to deliberate on their role, functions and capacities towards improving and sustaining mental healthcare and services in Ghana. Engaging these session participants will demonstrate how collaboration can enable organisations to identify concrete proposals and strategies for improved mental health services accessible to all in Ghana.

The main objective of the session is to present different organizational potential contributions to improving access to mental health services, engage the organizations in in a useful debate/discussion (with other session participants) to identify possible and practical strategic responses to challenges by governments, NGOs and others actors in the mental health field towards attaining universal health coverage and improved primary mental health services.

Several interventions are being undertaken to address some of the challenges associated with mental healthcare and service provision in Ghana.

* The Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) in collaboration with UKAID introduced several interventions to improve access to mental health services.
* The Ghana Health Service is a strategic partner towards promoting the integrated mental health services across the country.
* The Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) and the Mental Health and Well-being Foundation (MHWF) are providing evidence generation and advocacy toward improving quality mental health services within both the formal and informal sector.
* The WHO QualityRights project is promoting improved qualityof care and human rights in inpatient and outpatient mental health services.  Each of these institutions are addressing factors affecting access to mental healthcare and how to improve individual and community participation in healthcare and services.

The institutions are addressing issues ranging from allocation of resources, efficiency in service provision, engaging neglected populations and using community structures as innovative ways of promoting access to mental healthcare.

This organised session provides two different kinds of ‘main findings’; (a) the individual presentations demonstrate the outstanding organizational capabilities that are already available in Ghana that can work collaboratively to achieve improved access to mental health services; (b) the panelists’ discussion and concurrent engagement with session participants will generate options for ongoing collaboration after the session – options to present to government and others, and to encourage ongoing collaboration.

This session is organised by the Centre for Health Systems and Policy Research, to create a platform to promote access to quality mental health services across institutions in Ghana through collaboration among policy makers, advocates, researchers and implementers of policies, in order to respond to institutional challenges associated with access to mental health services.